

XIII. I Peter in Biblical Perspective
The Elect in the Exile
“The Call to Community, Axiom #2”
I Peter 1:22–25
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I will read through what we covered for axiom 1 as we prepare to look at axiom 2 on how elect exiles journey in this world to the celestial city to the majesty and glory and Christ. In this study we will look at those ways we are to live. I Peter 1:13–21 says [13] *Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. [14] As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, [15] but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, [16] since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” [17] And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, [18] knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, [19] but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. [20] He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you [21] who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

This text of Scripture gives us our axiom #2 which is how we live as elect exiles in this world, interestingly, before you come to it. There was a time when Christianity was expanding not just by addition and multiplication but geometric expansion was taking place. One of the church fathers living at that time was Tertullian and he recorded that believers at that time were under intense persecution. In fact, they were made spectacles for entertainment. They were fed to lions, decapitated, put on posts, burned alive and it was amazing the ways that had been invented to try and stamp out Christianity yet it continued to gloriously expand throughout the Roman Empire and then beyond. There were many things noted in Tertullian's writings as he recorded this expansion and the persecution against believers.

Tertullian was a great pastor, writer, preacher, apologist and evangelist. Tertullian recorded the bold witness of believers, how they extended love and showed love to everyone and how they were pulling unwanted children out of the rivers. The servant women (deaconesses) actually positioned themselves to fish these children out of the river to raise them and get them in homes. There were widows who were left to die when their sons no longer would take care of them but the church would bring them in and nurture them. There were a number of things recorded about how they showed the love of the Gospel throughout their community but Tertullian of pointed fact wrote this; the world remarked and marveled at how they loved one another. While the love to others was there, Gospel ministries of love and good deeds and justice were all taking place as well. A bold witness for Christ was everywhere but Tertullian noted the notation of the world on how they marveled at their love for one another. Why did it create such a marvel and what kind of love is that?

So keep that in the back of your mind for now and remember that if we don't have a context to a text then it can easily become a pretext. Here Peter has identified us with a very

specific term, elect exiles, as believers. The Bible gives multiple titles for us as Christians. Here are some; Christians, little Christs, disciples of Christ, people of the Way, saint, sinners saved by grace, ambassadors, the sent ones, called ones. Peter calls us elect exiles. Martin Luther, who can be given to hyperbole from time to time, when he commented on I Peter he said almost everything you ever need to know Christ, make Christ known effectively, faithfully and persistently is in this book (I Peter). This book is devoted to telling you the foundation, formation and motivation of the Christian life. In this book he says we are elect exiles, resident aliens, sojourners, pilgrims on a journey.

Peter does a comparison throughout from the Old Covenant. He says that just like the people in the Old Covenant were delivered out of the bondage of slavery, then girded up their loins to go into the wilderness and then into the Promised Land so this New Covenant Messiah has redeemed you from the slavery of sin so then you gird up the loins of your mind and you follow Me into this sin-cursed desolate world which I will bring you through as exiles into a Promised Land of a new heavens and a new earth.

It is clear this book become known as quite the inspiration of a well-known piece of literature written by John Bunyan called Pilgrim's Progress. It is almost like a commentary on this epistle. This maybe something you would want to read as a family or on your own if you are looking to see how this correlates with I Peter.

Peter has just told us God has saved us and that we are Christ-secured as His inheritance. He is securing us for the inheritance He is keeping for us. He gives us an unbelievable sentence that is 178 words in I Peter 1:3–12 where in it he gives praise to God for our great salvation as the elect of God is secured by the love and grace of God through His Son Jesus Christ, now he says here is what it means to be a resident alien. Then he lays out a series of commands that start in I Peter 1:13 and goes all the way through I Peter 5. You will notice that he will never give us commands of what we do for Christ as exiles until he tells us who we are in Christ as the elect.

He first tells us who we are in Christ because you and I have this streak of arrogance within us that if he gave the commands first we would then think what we do with the commands is what enables Him to save us. The reality is that we can't save ourselves and we can't do anything to enable God to save us. We are dead in our sins. God saves us through the glorious, sovereign, sufficient work of Jesus Christ and because of His electing grace before the foundation of the world that has been secured at the cross and supplied by the Spirit of God, He now says you're ready to live for Me.

This term exile or resident alien is an interesting term. Whenever you are a resident alien in a nation that nation and its authorities tell you what you can and can't do. Christians, by nature of what God calls us to be, we're supposed to be submissive to the authorities over us. So we certainly understand that but Peter says we're a citizen of a bigger Kingdom, a King who is King over all the kingdoms and so we as resident aliens do not go to the nations where we live to tell us what we're permitted to do. We are certainly good citizens of the law of the land unless that law tells us to transgress the law of our God and our King for then we must obey God rather than man. But how we live as resident aliens is not defined by the authority of the nation where we reside but by the authority of our King who tells us how we are to live.

Peter's very first commandment I have called axiom #1. How do we live in a sin-cursed world effectively, faithfully, persistently and productively for the glory of God and be filled with the joy of the Lord in a broken world knowing that everything that happens to an unbeliever in a broken world can happen to a believer except the condemning judgments of God? In this world

we face all these things that God is using to perfect us and grow us in grace in the midst of all these trials and situations. This is how we are to be ready to live for Him in this broken world.

First you know who you are by His electing grace. This is why Peter gives us that glorious statement in I Peter 1:3–12 first. Now here is what you do based upon that foundation. It is a Divine summons to the personal pursuit of pervasive holiness. The first command is given to us in I Peter 1:15–16 which says [15] *but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, [16] since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”* You already have a positional holiness that is perfect for Jesus’ blood has wiped away your sins and Jesus’ righteousness stands on your behalf. Now in praise, love and thanksgiving to God you begin to pursue a personal holiness which says I am His, He is mine and He has my life. Jesus is not at the top of the priorities of my life. Jesus is my life. I’m pursuing holiness and this Jesus is the One that sets the priorities of my life. I Corinthians 10:31 says [31] *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* I don’t do this to be saved or for Him to keep me saved but it’s because He saved me, keeps me and indwells me so I want to pursue that.

You do that through a prepared mind. In I Peter 1:13 it says [13] *Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* In other words, your present occupation of pursuing holiness is founded upon your ultimate destination of being with Christ and Christ coming for you. Your Christ-secured destination that you are looking toward becomes the foundation for your Christ-exalting present occupation. Knowing where I’m going gives me motivation out of the electing love of Christ and the grace that is right now being brought to me.

Secondly, you purpose your mind to kill the ‘old man’ in your life every day. Assassinate sin. We had this former way of living in which it was all about me so we need to kill the old man every day within us. Every morning before I get out of bed and go to the chair I have my time with the Lord, I try to say two things – God thank You for saving me and secondly, God would You help me kill my old man today. Would You let grace come and meet me today? In other words, the Bible is saying ‘help me kill me today.’ Paul put it this way in Galatians 2:20, [20] *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* You are living but to live you have to die and you kill yourself in order to live unto Christ.

Thirdly, you live in the fear of the Lord during your exile. That is the fear of the Lord in which you see God in all of His glory and that’s the beginning of wisdom. God in this unbelievable joy and calling you have given to me, give me the reverence that I am under the eye of a thrice Holy God. This Judge of all is my Father. I am His and He is mine. His Son has died for me. His Spirit now resides in me. Help me walk with that reverence and majesty always before me guiding my joy in Your presence. So that is axiom #1, what is axiom #2? This is where we find out why Tertullian said what he said.

I Peter 1:22–25 says [22] *Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, [23] since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; [24] for “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, [25] but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you.*

Axiom #2 is that we move from the personal to the corporate into the community where there is a Divine summons to love one another. We are called to give that love to one another

with no barriers. When Jesus went to that cross the roof of sin He blew away to unite you to God. He also knocked down the walls and the barriers to unite us to one another in the Lord. The world through its scientific speculations divide the world up into races. We say 'no' for there is only one race which are men and women made in the image of God. There are multiple ethnicities but one race with one set of parents, Adam and Eve, made by God and we all come from them. It is a human race, a race of Adam.

We also know there is a redeemed race which is through the second Adam and it is those who belong to Christ in which there is no Jew or Gentile for all of those differences have been struck down. The same blood was shed for all of us. The same Spirit indwells in all of us. The same Word has been given to all of us. We have one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. We are one in Christ and therefore we love one another and that is the Divine summons. Peter profiles that love for us and gives us three things about that love in the text.

The first thing is the love is to be an earnest love for one another. Earnest is an intentional life action based upon conviction. We are convinced that Jesus Christ is our Savior and that His blood redeems all of His people. We are convinced that we are one in Christ. We understand there are different ethnicities. We understand some have to deal with wealth or no wealth, some have to deal with age and all that but we understand that we are one in Christ. I am sitting in Taiwan in 2 ½ hour fellowship with a brother in Christ and also a colleague in ministry who lives in Red China. One would have thought we were both living in south Alabama just watching us. There was no doubt we understood our national issues but sitting at that table you could not slide an envelope between us.

What is true of national dynamics is true of ethnicities and certainly ought to be true of colors of skin and we know that but with no partiality we are to love one another because the same blood that saved me saved them. The same Spirit who fills me fills them. The same mission given to me is given to them. Those convicting truths make our love earnest. I saw a bumper sticker that said 'do random acts of love.' I think I know what they are getting at when they say that but as Christians we don't do random acts of love. We do purposed acts of love. When there is a need we go and we earnestly come to that point. It says in the book of Acts that even though everyone had their own title to their property they lived as if it belonged to everybody else and if someone had a need they were selling things in order to meet one another's needs.

It's so wonderful to experience this kind of love first hand as I have in serving at this church. I want us to excel still more for not that we have arrived by any means but I have seen this earnest love for one another here and been the beneficiary of it as well. Early on when I was here my wife had to have surgery and then there was a little problem afterward that also had to be dealt with so I was trying to fix food for myself and the next thing I know I have meals showing up from everywhere. The Sunday after when I was in the pulpit I thanked everyone wholeheartedly and had to say but that's enough because now I'll need to go out and by a freezer just to keep it all which I certainly didn't want to throw it away. When I got home that afternoon the freezer was there in my garage. To this day I still don't know who did it. I rejoiced in the Lord and came back the following Sunday thanking everyone not meaning for one to buy me a freezer but I know it was out of the earnest conviction that meals were provided and the freezer was given. Who I am in Christ, who they are in Christ and what we have together for the need is enough in Christ.

Secondly, Peter says the love is heart-felt. You can't have a heart-felt love until you get a new heart. This is not something that is done cosmetically outside but this is something that

comes from the inside out. Why? It is not only that you have a prepared mind but you have a purified soul. That soul that is being purified to the obedience of the Truth is at work and therefore there is a heart-felt desire to do this. I'm not looking to be noticed or pay back. This is I Corinthians 13 love. It's not rude, arrogant, looking out for its own or what I'll get out of it. No, it is earnest and heart-felt and my joy is just having the privilege to love you.

Thirdly, it is a sincere love. Sincere is an interesting word in the Greek for when you work your way back to its meaning it basically means 'no wax.' Another way to say it would be without hypocrisy. There is no mask. You're not playing a game or a role. No wax was taken from an example like someone having a sculpture that fell and broke but it was worth a lot of money. There would be people back then that could put it back together and then around the edges they would put in wax so that it would look like nothing had ever happened to it to the untrained eye. Then they would put a finish on it and sell it for full price. In other words, it was fraudulent. This is telling us we don't bring fraudulent love. It is something from the heart with an earnest desire for what it will accomplish for the need being sincere.

To have love like this for the brethren that the world looks at and marvels at, Peter tells us there are two prerequisites. A graduation from school is a prerequisite to the next step, like a class in college may have 3 classes that are a prerequisite to that certain class. Prerequisite number one is a purified soul. That word purified means cleansed, cleansed by the blood of Jesus and a washing of water of the truth with obedience. According to I Peter 1:22 it is a soul purified by obedience to the truth and it's not just knowledge of the truth. You have to get the doctrine for without doctrine you can't get doxology or have discipline or devotion. You can know the Bible and it not make any real difference but you can't make a difference in praise to God and loving one another in the manner that is being described for us without knowing the Truth. Obedience begins to cleanse our soul and as our soul is cleansed then comes sincerity, earnestness and heart-felt love.

The second prerequisite is that you have to be born again. In the first axiom I said in order to pursue holiness you have to be a Christian and the same thing is true about this axiom. To get this love you can't have a heart-felt love until you have a changed heart. You can't get earnestness until you get a changed direction. You have to be born again for when you are by the grace of God you get a new record, a new heart, a new life, a new home, a new perspective and you get a new family. We all have the same Father, same Savior and we're brothers and sisters. We are blood bought and Spirit brought. Some are younger, older, have more resources, different skin color, single, married, etc. but here we are brothers and sisters in the Lord a part of a forever family of God and we were born again into it.

How did we get born again? I will talk more about this in the next study but I am just mentioning it now. Being born again is so powerful in the Bible. We are born again by imperishable seed and not perishable seed. What is that imperishable seed? It is the abiding Word of God. When Jesus was talking with Nicodemus about being born again it said one was born again by the Spirit and here it says we're born again by the Word. It is by both that we are born again. The Spirit of God always works with the Word of God and the Word of God profits when the Spirit of God is there. So you are born again by a sovereign God when He brings His Word through people to you and the Spirit of God gets joined to that Word where we get brought from death unto life. In Christ we are made anew. We are new creations in Christ.

You will never get redeemed because of where you were or where you lived or how much you did or didn't have or what the world says about you or doesn't say about you. You are going to be saved, not by those temporal things that are perishable, but by what lasts forever.

The Word of the Lord abides forever and it is that Word that is preached to you. It is the glorious point of the spear or the glorious spear of truth which is Good News. The Savior has come to redeem we who are helpless and hopeless and we have everlasting life in Him. That is what causes our lives, when we're born again, to take on a whole new life. It is not the perishable but the imperishable.

When I was young I was exposed to a missionary whom the Lord blessed but not seemingly at first. He and some friends went to evangelize in South America and it was there that they were all killed by the Auca Indians. So do you know what happened next? Their wives came after them. Now 85 to 90 percent of those Auca Indians are believers. I have actually been with the son of the man who killed Jim Elliot. I remember floating down the river with him praying that it would be like father like son. He began to tell me what the Gospel did when Elisabeth Elliott followed the death of her husband there. Jim Elliot said "One life it will soon be passed, only what is done for Christ will last." The things of this world do not make our life which are perishable. It is Christ who makes our life and that's how we handle the things of this world.

Here what I will leave you with in closing. Peter is giving us here what Jesus said to them at the first Lord's Supper, which is a new commandment I have given to you that you love one another as I have loved you. One of the axioms of the church is not only when the church guides you to truth and you seek uniqueness that we belong to Him alone in this world, but now corporately we together love one another. And the same Jesus that told us the truth would set us free would be His and follow Him, now says follow Me and love one another the way I love you. He brought an unmerited, relentless, unstoppable love to us and He now wants us to bring that to each other. It's not rude, arrogant or seek its own.

You bring that love to each other because you have been born again. You can't do this love until you are born again but if you are born again what I am saying is resonating in your heart right now and you must love one another, for you can't help yourself for wanting to love one another earnestly, sincerely, heart-felt. So if you are reading this today and you haven't come to Christ but He is stirring your soul please call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 about a commitment to Christ. Come to Christ just as you are and watch what He does in your life. You can't love like this until you have known the love of Christ and you have been born again.

Secondly it is because we see each other differently as well. I remember the story of Martin Lloyd Jones who was a new Christian and he was headed to a Christmas dinner. He knew the Salvation Army was going to be there with placards about Jesus, their band playing all out of tune and he was a very wealthy, well-known doctor. He was so embarrassed about it because everybody knew he was a new Christian as he would walk by that band playing off tune and everything yet they would be talking about Jesus with these glorious smiles. He sat down beside his wife and said 'those are my people, I'll never be separated from them again nor ashamed of them. They love Jesus and I love them.' We see each other differently and not on the distinctions of the world – color of skin, social status, pedigree, influence – but we see each other in Christ and for Christ.

Thirdly, we do it because we have been made different as well. Because we are born again we want to love. Until you're born again you can't love one another with an earnest, sincere, heart-felt love. Once you are born again you are compelled and want to love one another because we're family.

The year I was turning 40 I decided I was going to run a marathon and it probably was the stupidest decision I ever made in my life. After completing it I got a towel with 4 hours and

28 minutes sewed onto it. I don't even look at that towel any more plus I got knee surgery and probably another one in the future. I even came back and did it when I was 41 which was really stupid then.

I got my dad involved with helping me train. So right before the marathon I asked him if he would ride the course with me. I heard that if you eat spaghetti the night before then you would finish so he and went to eat that and ride the course. By the time we got to mile 17 my dad said to me "Son, are you an idiot. We have changed time zones three times. What are you doing? Are you crazy?" That wasn't exactly an encouraging moment for me but then I got to the race and unfortunately the first two miles are downhill which makes you think it's going to be a lot easier than is but I was pumped up and ready to do.

Halfway down that first two miles is a funeral home with 11 men out front in blue suits taking names as we're running by. I remember my family – my wife, my two daughters who practically paid for their education through running, my sisters, my dad and mom. I would see them cheering and then they would get in the car, ride ahead, I'd come by and they would cheer and repeat the process. After we got past mile 16 they no longer got in the car to ride ahead but they just ran ahead until I would catch up to them but they were there to encourage me because we're family.

Remember the two miles downhill at the beginning? That is where the marathon ended but this time it's two miles uphill. I can't tell the number of times I wanted to quit. A guy I went to school with drove an emergency medical vehicle, he rode by me and said hello and then turned around and came back. He then said 'Ike are you doing alright?' I said 'Yeah I'm doing fine.' He said 'You don't look too good' and that wasn't an encouragement but my family was encouraging me. Then my daughters got out and ran along side of me taking turns because I was about to quit. These girls that could run like the wind were trotting with a turkey but they were right there. My sisters then came out. A year ago my oldest sister went to be with the Lord but I remember her actually getting off the curb and that last ½ mile she said 'don't stop' and she ran it with me.

We are on a journey. We are on a marathon and you don't go alone for the Holy Spirit will be with you and we go together. Let's love one another with a sincere heart and an earnest desire that is heartfelt. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Lord, would You speak to our hearts now. If there are some reading this today that want to be born again would You have them call us here at Briarwood (at (205) 776-5200) so that someone can pray with them, knowing that Jesus has died for them, is ready to receive them and we don't have to go get better to be loved. While we were still enemies Christ loved us and died for us at the right time. Now is the time to come to Him. Father, for those who know You would You so work in our lives, not only that we would pursue a pervasive walk with You governed by holiness looking to the coming of our Savior, killing our sin and walking in the glorious love of Christ and formed by the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom. And then would You make us, call us, empower us and enable us to love one another that the world would marvel and would want to know about the One who loves us that they might know the love of Christ, having seen it in us with one another, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

AXIOM #1 FOR ELECT EXILES

Be Holy in all your conduct for I am Holy

A Divine summons to the personal pursuit of pervasive holiness.

A Prepared Mind

- Fixed on the second coming of Christ
- Daily denial of the “old man”
- Fear of the Lord {note}

AXIOM #2 FOR ELECT EXILES

A Divine summons to Love One Another

The Profile

- Earnest
- Heart-felt
- Sincere

The Prerequisites

- Purified soul
- Born again

LIFE TAKEAWAY

A New Commandment I give to you that you love one another as I have loved you...

- Because we are born again...
- Because we see each other differently...
- Because we are different...